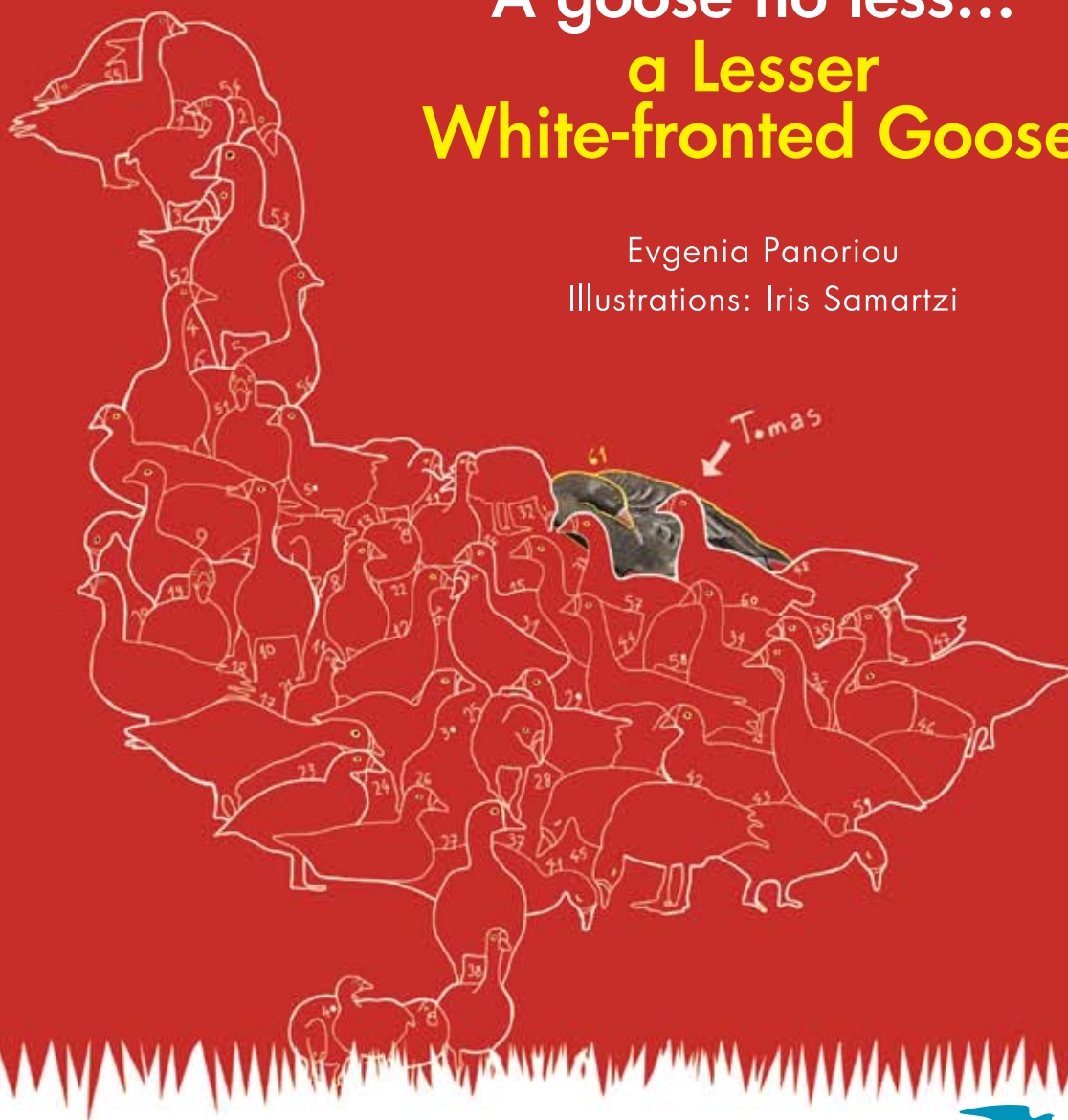


# A goose no less... a Lesser White-fronted Goose!

Evgenia Panoriou

Illustrations: Iris Samartzi






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**a Lesser White-fronted Goose!**

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All the creatures that live  
in the far North share a  
secret, every year as  
the seasons change,   
so too must their habits  
and their lives.



Before the cold snap of winter arrives, the Lessers get ready for their long migratory journey. Like every year, they would once again leave the frozen North, and head down South where the winter is milder and the food **abundant**.





# 1. Tomas, a tiny Lesser White-fronted Goose

Tomas was now a big Lesser (no less...). He turned two years old last spring. He was preening his feathers silently, preparing for his third journey. "Are you ready Tomas?" his father asked.

Tomas still remembered last year's difficult journey, countless flaps and only a handful of Lessers. 63 had left but only **61** had made it back.

"Yes..." he replied half-heartedly, plucking out a feather.

*No; I am not ready,* he thought to himself.







"Remind me please why we have to leave?" he asked his father.

"We leave because soon the snow will cover and freeze the grass. Because this is what we simply must do every year, we are migratory birds afterall!" his father laughed.

"You mean because we insist on...

flying under the rain even though we are NOT completely waterproof,

trying to find wetlands that do NOT exist anymore,

NOT letting the wind drift us wherever it chooses

conquering time all the time..."

mumbled Tomas, but his father had already flown off to join the rest of the flock.



A detailed illustration of a flock of geese. In the foreground, a large Greater White-fronted Goose is shown in profile, facing right, with its wings partially spread. It has a dark body, a white patch on its forehead, and a pinkish bill. Behind it, several other geese are visible, some with dark plumage and others with lighter, mottled feathers. The background is a bright yellow-green, suggesting a field or marsh. The overall style is that of a children's book illustration.

## 2. Packing luggage and plumage

Tomas had to come to terms with it; he was a migratory bird and so he had to begin his journey on time.

He stopped preening his feathers and flew towards his flock.

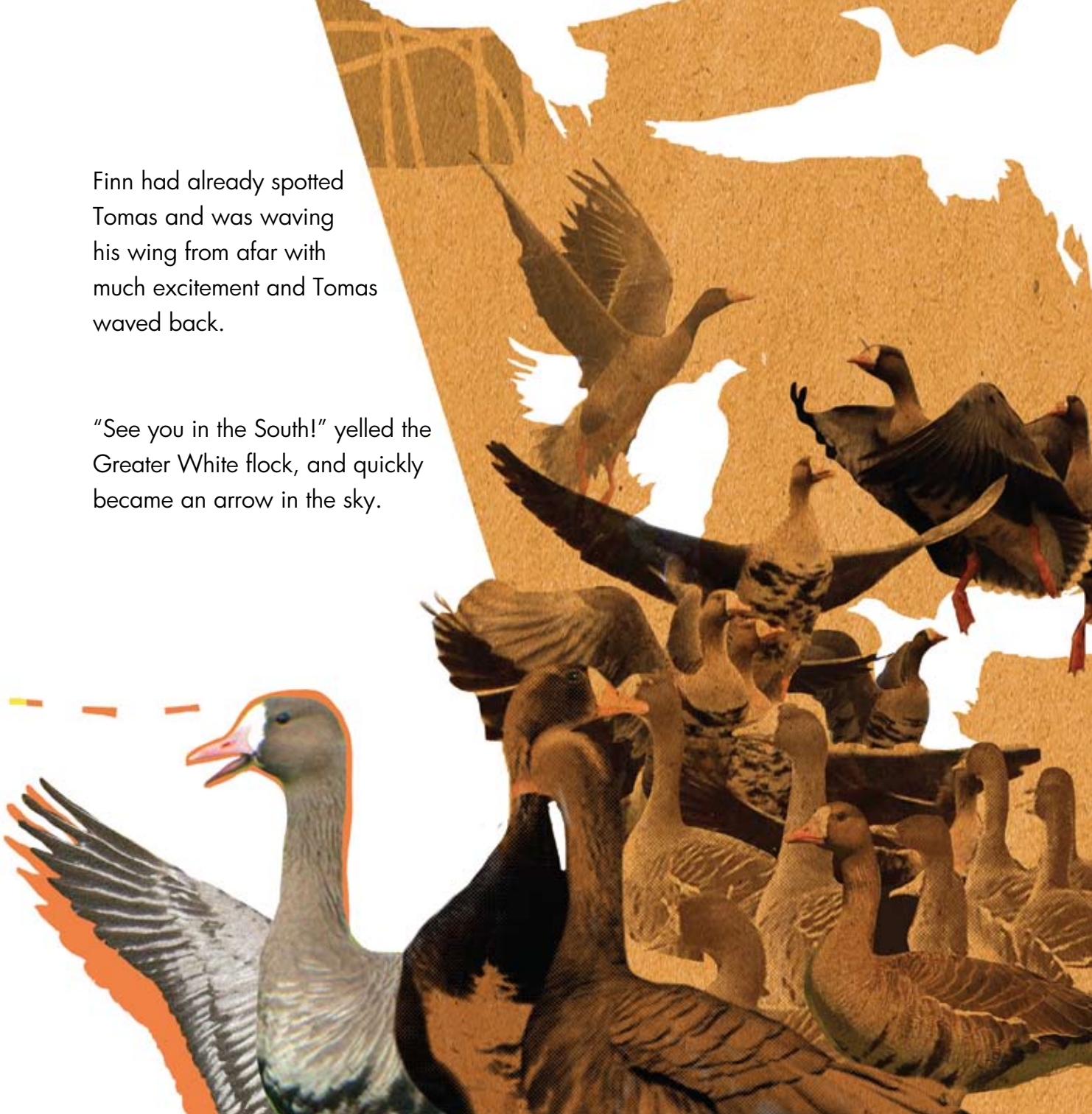
Beside his flock, there was now a big flock of larger geese. These geese were all in position, ready for take off.

Amongst them he spotted Finn, his best and only friend. Finn was not a lesser, as much as they were alike, he was a Greater White-fronted Goose, the same as the rest of the geese in that flock.



Finn had already spotted  
Tomas and was waving  
his wing from afar with  
much excitement and Tomas  
waved back.

"See you in the South!" yelled the  
Greater White flock, and quickly  
became an arrow in the sky.







### 3. Fasten your seat belts, take off!

The Lessers in Tomas' flock were busy arranging their flight positions. "Morten will lead, Imre and Astrid follow, Ingar and Jannike behind them. The larger Lessers next and the smaller ones at the end..." one Lesser instructed. Tomas was standing just a few steps away. "And Tomas in the end" the same Lesser added, and Tomas took his position in the flock. "One, two, three... let's go!" the flock leader called out. Tomas opened and spread his wings wide, they were now enormous and very soon he could see everything from high above. He was not flying with his heart though... but only with his wings.







Ingar

Imre

Morten

Jannike

Astrid





A few miles on, they met the Greater White-fronted Geese up in the sky. Soon, they were all flying together, the Lessers and Greaters became one big flock and Tomas was now flying next to Finn.

"Where have you been little guy?" the Greater goose said jokingly. "Where else? On my way South, on the southern skyway..." Tomas replied, already looking exhausted. The two had met during last years' journey; this was when they had created the spot-the-difference game together. Whoever would find the most differences would get to land first.

1

"Your body is smaller!" Finn cried.

2

"The white blaze on your forehead is smaller" said Tomas.

3

"Your bill is shorter!" laughed out Finn.

4

"You don't have a yellow ring around your eye!" yelled Tomas.

5

"Hmm... Your head is darker! Yes!" replied Finn and he assumed the landing position to land first.







"Flap your wings  
a little more, Tomas!  
We are almost there  
at the land of the cows"  
Finn said encouragingly.

## 4. Tomas, the only Lesser in the flock

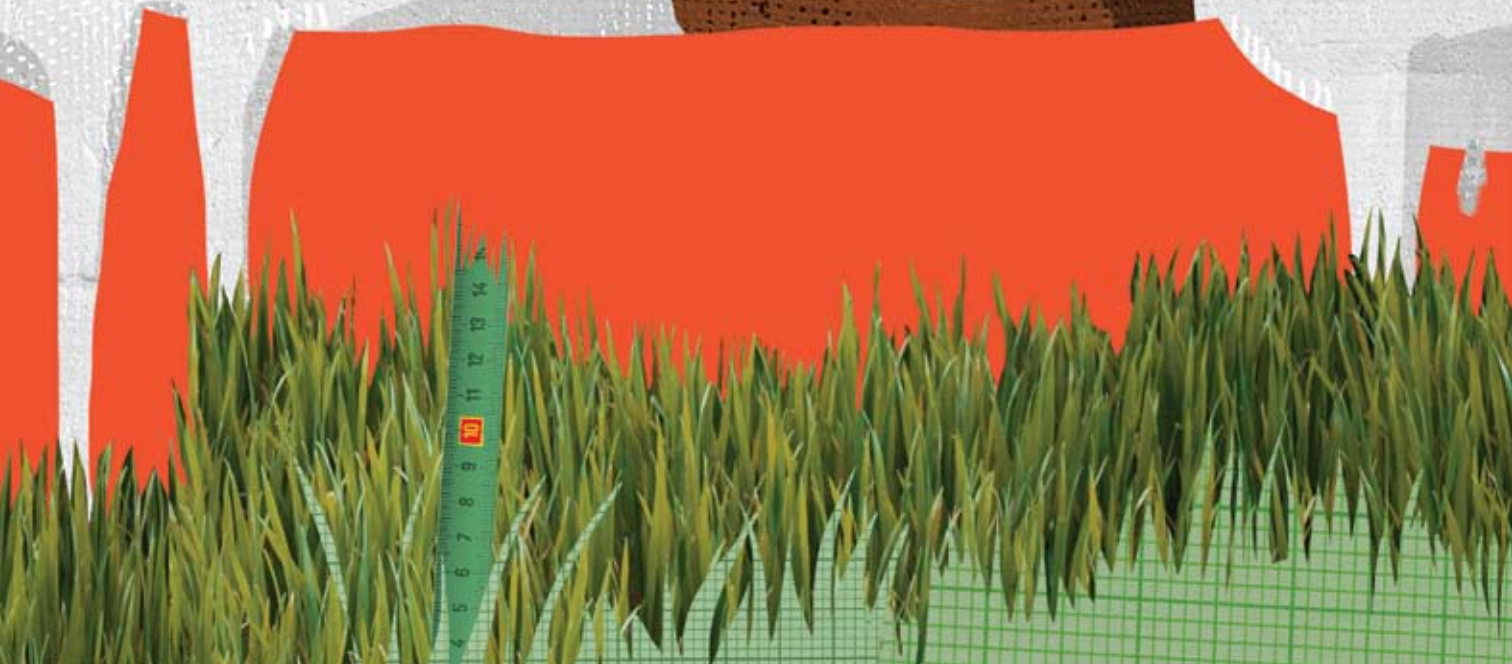
And this is how it happened... As soon as the flock landed, the two friends went off to find their friend Klara. Klara was a chubby cow with the longest horns Tomas had ever seen. "Don't go too far" said Tomas' father, but his words barely reached the geeses' ears. A few flaps of the wings and they found Klara. "And look who it is" Klara moo-ed.

What Tomas liked most of all about this place was that Klara would eat the grass and then fresh grass would spring again in its place!

A tasty grass-meal was exactly what he needed right now.







When they returned, the two friends noticed there were fewer geese in the flock... The Greater White-fronts explained that some poachers had come close to their feeding grounds and the Lesser White-fronts that were amongst the flock had to leave.







"How could they leave me all alone?!"

cried Tomas, his bill hung wide open with shock looking towards the horizon.

Finn looked at his small friend, whose sad wings, now seemed to reach the ground with disappointment.

"You know how much the Lessers are afraid of people" Finn explained.

"And now what?" Tomas exclaimed. "I have such a long way to go still and the winter is getting closer! A single Lesser is like no Lesser!"

"Don't worry Tomas, you will travel with us!" cried all the Greater White-fronted Geese in unison.




## 5. The quickest journey

The geese set sail  
for the place they knew  
that the Lessers would be.







The Lessers would stay there for many days before they continued with the next stage of their journey. The Greaters could catch up with them and Tomas would be able to look for his Lesser White-fronted Goose flock.

The Greaters flew constantly, day and night.

They only stopped when the young geese displayed warning signs:

“Our bellies are rumbling, our wings are hanging!”

Empty bellies and heavy wings were signs that the geese, whether they liked it or not, had to stop every now and then. But they couldn’t stop just anywhere!

They needed water and fields and peace and quiet.

The good goose places are few and time was running out!

## 6. Looking for his flock

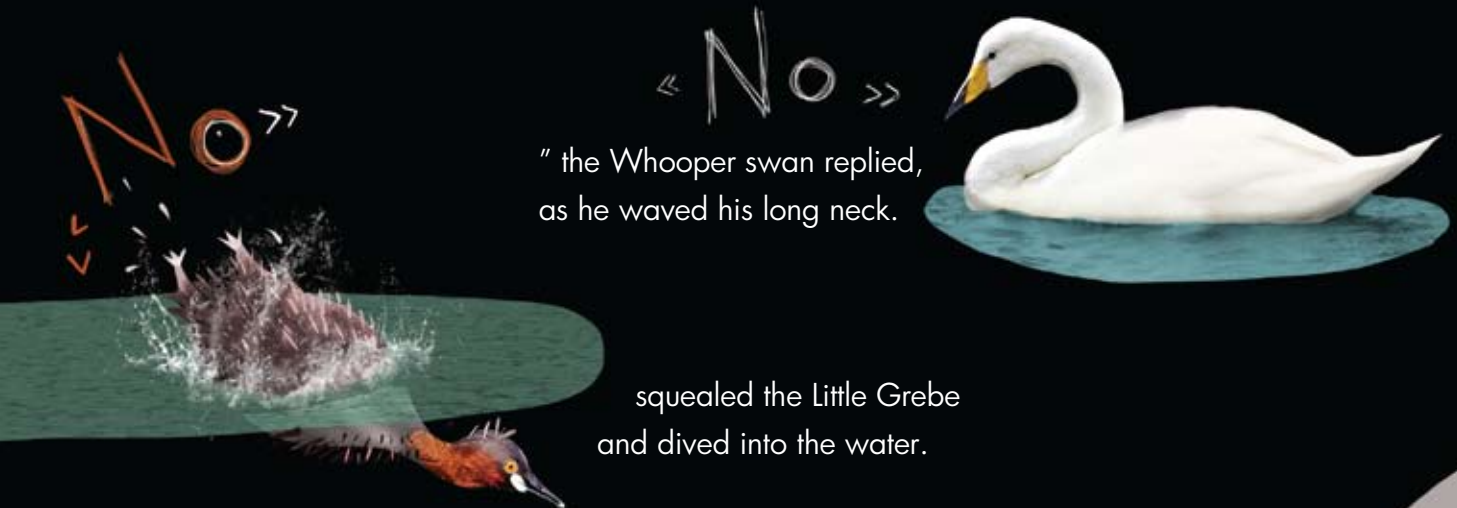
After many geese had taken the role of flock leader, they finally saw their destination. When they landed, Tomas' bill dropped in astonishment! It was truly a goose-tastic place! And not just for geese but for many other bird species too.

"Have you seen the Lesser White-fronted Geese anywhere?"

he started asking everyone.



rattled the heron  
as he harpooned a fish.



" the Whooper swan replied,  
as he waved his long neck.

squealed the Little Grebe  
and dived into the water.





«No»

the Sea Eagle  
answered angrily  
and flew off.



«No»


mumbled the Otter  
and she paddled away.



«No»


hissed the water snake and  
she slipped into the water.

Tomas had not heard that many «No» in a very long time!



At night, he roosted with the Greater White-fronted Geese. Being here, the world suddenly seemed enormous, and he could feel on each of his feathers his name: Lesser White-front... *A goose no less... a lesser white-fronted goose*, Tomas thought to himself and he remembered that each Lesser has its own unique pattern on the belly, making it easier for the Lessers to distinguish themselves from one another.



A night scene with a dark blue sky, a yellow crescent moon, and white stars. A large, dark, textured cloud is on the right. In the foreground, a swan with brown and white feathers is lying down, its head tucked back. Above the swan, a trail of small, glowing numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) is visible, suggesting the swan is counting stars. The background shows dark, rolling hills and a body of water in the foreground.

He rubbed his belly with his bill.  
The first line is shorter,  
the second a little larger,  
the third is like the first two joined together,  
the fourth is the largest of them all and  
the fifth the smallest.

He counted them over and over  
again, until he fell asleep.

The next day as he was eating his morning grassy breakfast, he saw from afar the people that were guarding and protecting the goose grounds, they were called "The Wardens". He was not afraid of them; they seemed nice enough and seemed to know a whole lot about geese. He went closer and listened:

"We didn't see enough of the Lessers this year. I managed to count them only 5 times..."

"And we haven't seen them for 3 days now..."

"They'll probably be at that place that nobody knows about"

"Nobody?!  
I don't think so!"

cried Tomas. He ran to find Finn and convinced him to help him find the secret place. Maybe there he would find his flock. It was him that best knew what the Lessers would be looking for: lots of grass, water, peace and quiet.










## 7. Unsuitable and ruined "lesser white-fronted goose hotels"


The two friends, started to look at all the wetlands in the area.

Tomas was looking for a Lesser-White fronted Goose heaven.


"How about here?" asked Finn in every place they found.



"No,  
the water is too deep,  
we are not diving ducks".




"No, the water is too little,  
we are not sparrows".



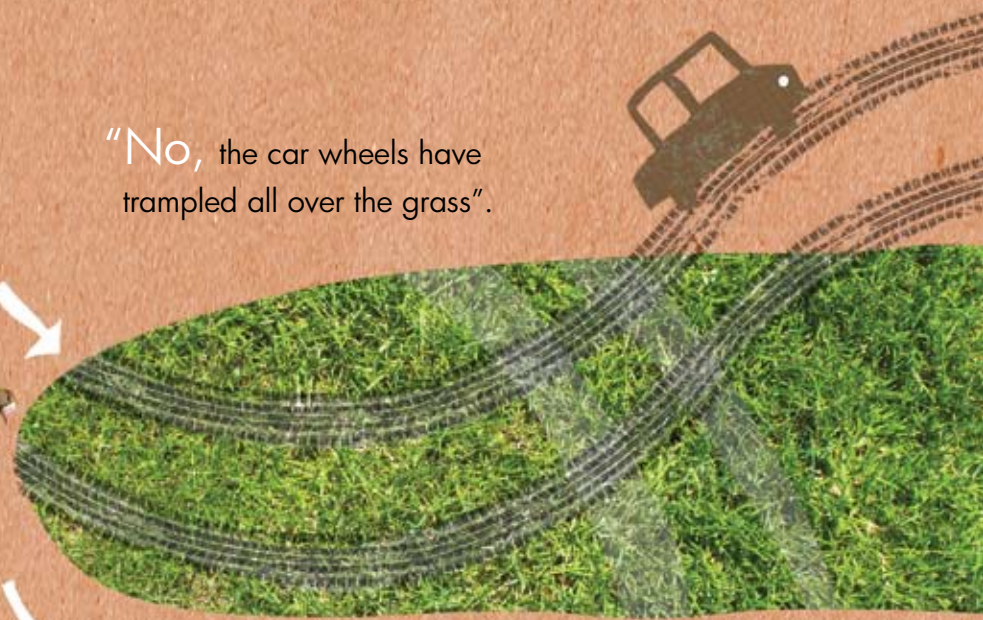
"No, there are poachers here looking for Greater White-fronted  
Geese. You will be in danger and so will I, as I look like you".









"No, there are too many trees here, we cannot see if danger approaches".



"No, the car wheels have trampled all over the grass".



"You're not easy to please...!" complained Finn.



"We, the Lessers just know what we want" flaunted Tomas.



## 8. Before you can say “Lesser”!

After countless flaps, Tomas suddenly felt that they were approaching the right place. They had just discovered a patch of wet grassland with fresh grass and lots of space. He could now see them! Finn could swear that the yellow ring around Tomas' eye was starting to glow! “You're all here!” screamed Tomas, flying to join them.

“Now, all 61 of us!” his father laughed opening up his wings.

“Now, the whole flock!” added Tomas and opened up his wings too.

“Come now, we still have a way to go. We are already late for our next destination.

Do you remember where it is?”

“Yes, our last destination in the South. Where hunting is not allowed and the grass is lush and fresh” Tomas said happily. There they would meet again with the Greater White-fronts and Finn would be reunited with his flock too. Their final destination would allow them many days of rest until the season's wheel would turn again and their habits and their lives would change once more with the coming spring. And the truth is... the geese need a lot of rest before they start their migration journey back North.





Tomas took a few steps  
towards the take off runway.  
He turned his bill to the horizon.





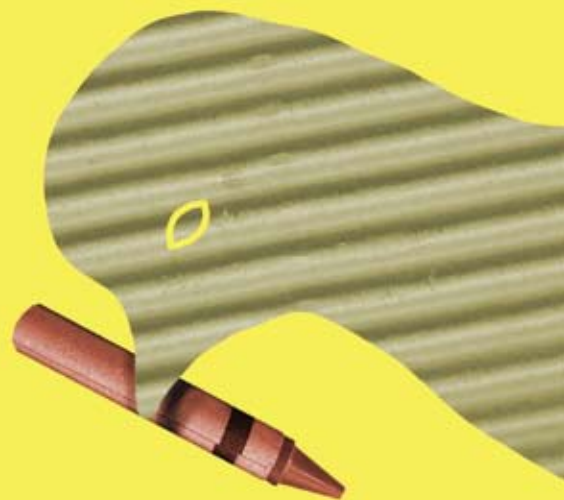


He closed his eyes imagining for one moment  
the place that would welcome them.  
Now he could fly with all of his heart.  
For the first time he felt the Lesser  
was only in the name.

"We'll be there before I can say... Lesser!"  
he whooped and his cry opened up  
the skyway ahead of him...

**The end**





Time to play...



1. Paint  
Tomas and Finn

Don't Forget!!

The yellow ring  
around my eye.

The pattern on my belly.\*


The white blaze on my forehead.

The dark brown colour  
on my head.

Tomas

\*  
Tomas





Don't forget!!

I don't have a yellow ring  
around my eye.  
I have a smaller white blaze  
on my forehead.  
My head is lighter  
brown colour.

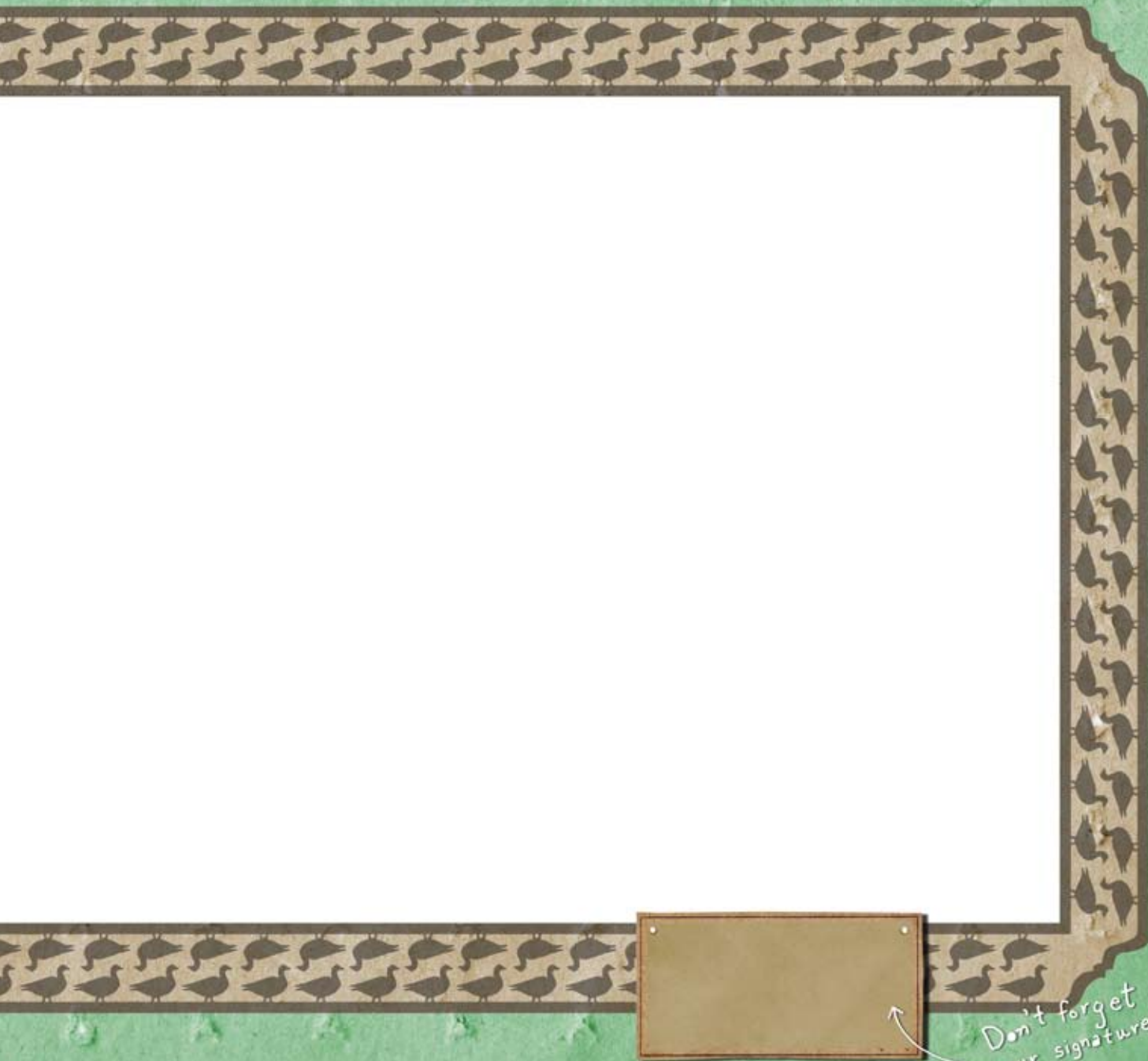
Finn

2

Imagine the  
secret  
goose-place...

Can you draw it?





Don't forget  
your signature!

3.

Draw Tomas'  
route.....✈



## BOARDING PASS

ROUND TRIP

ROUTE:

Norway- Finland- Estonia-  
Lithuania- Hungary- Bulgaria-  
Greece.

DURATION OF JOURNEY:

AUG. SEPT. NOV. DEC.  
JAN. FEB. MAR. APR.  
MAY JUN. JUL.





**Imagine yourself as a Lesser White-fronted Goose.  
Find some friends of yours and make a goose flock!**

- You can first try to move as a flock.

Choose who will be first, who will be last and take off!  
Don't forget to **change places** at the flock during your flight.

- Remember the threats that Tomas is facing and figure out ways to overcome the journey's difficulties.

- Try to answer:

- What are the **threats** of a Lesser White-fronted Goose?
- How can they **overcome** their difficulties and who can help them?
- Will your flock manage to **survive** and reach its final destination in the South?

- You can try to write your own scenario or just improvise!



**Good luck and have  
a safe journey!**

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## The Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS) and the LWfG

The HOS works towards the conservation of endangered birds as well as all wild birds and their habitats. More than 60 bird species are now threatened with extinction in Greece, among them the LWfG, the smallest and most threatened goose of Europe.

The LWfG of Europe that visit the wetlands of Greece each year are now less than 70. The HOS and its fellow companions from 5 different countries (Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary, Norway, Finland) are putting their greatest efforts in order to protect the endangered LWfG.

And in what way do they do that?

- By transmitting the message that we need to continue to co-inhabit this planet together with the LWfG, as we have done for hundreds of years
- By observing the route followed by the LWfG in their migratory journey in order to learn more about the areas they visit to rest, spend the winter and also to make their nests
- By protecting all these areas (for example, by ensuring the presence of quite wet meadows where the LWfG can find plenty of grass and a space to rest)

With your support we can provide a safer environment for the LWfG.

To find out more about the LWfG and the actions taken to protect them please visit: [www.wwf.fi/lwfG](http://www.wwf.fi/lwfG)

Even more information can be found at: [www.piskulka.net](http://www.piskulka.net)



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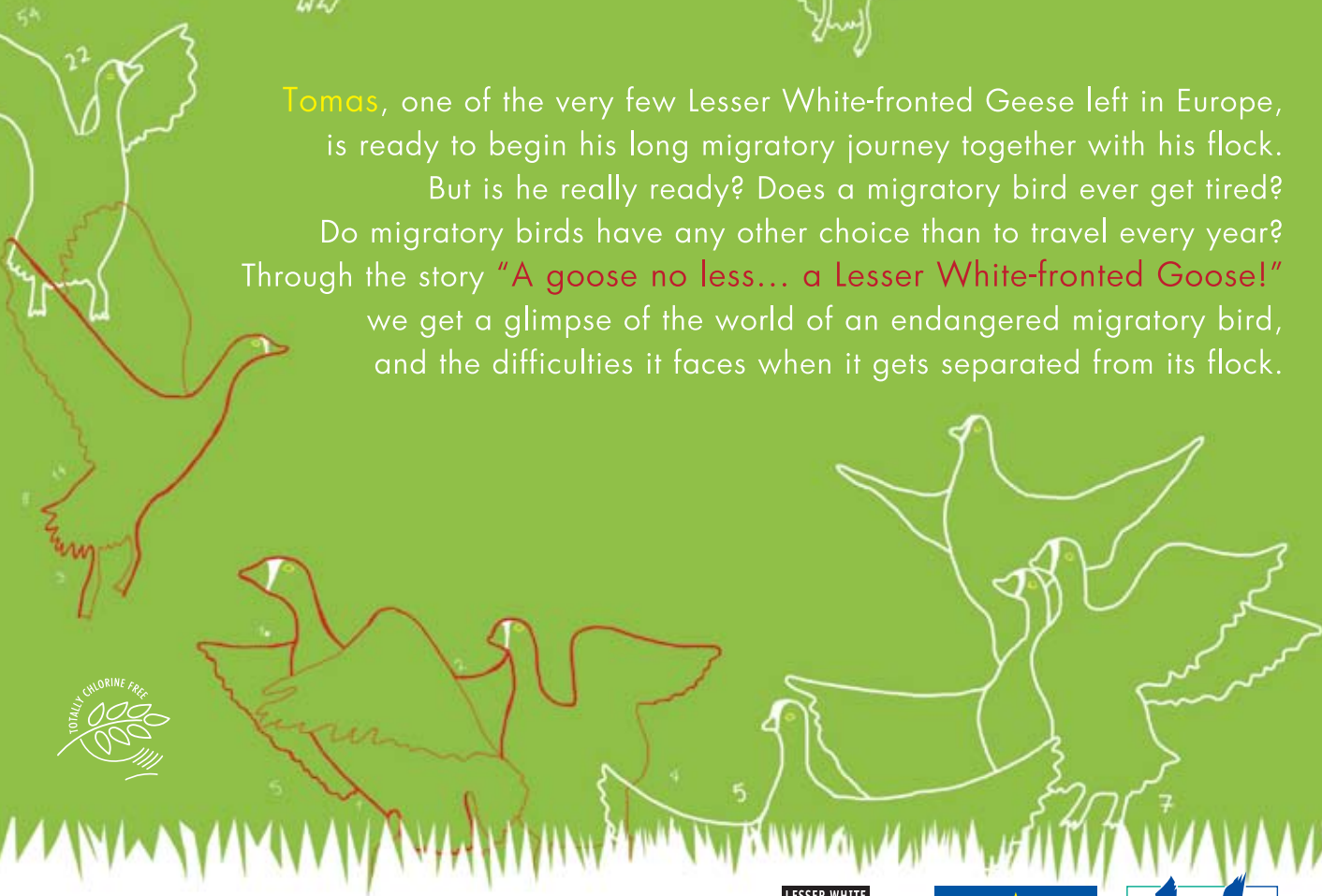






**Tomas**, one of the very few Lesser White-fronted Geese left in Europe, is ready to begin his long migratory journey together with his flock.

But is he really ready? Does a migratory bird ever get tired? Do migratory birds have any other choice than to travel every year? Through the story "**A goose no less... a Lesser White-fronted Goose!**" we get a glimpse of the world of an endangered migratory bird, and the difficulties it faces when it gets separated from its flock.



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